



Election Monitoring of TV Channels

September 19 – October 26, 2013

In connection to the presidential elections of 2013, CRRC Georgia continues its media monitoring within the frameworks of the project “Professional Media for Elections”, funded by the EU-UNDP program. The monitoring started on May 15 and will last until November 15. The monitoring covers the main evening news programs on the Channel One of the Public Broadcaster, Adjara TV and the following private channels: Rustavi 2, Imedi, Maestro and Kavkasia. The Channel 9 was also monitored until it was shut down. This report contains the media monitoring results from September 19 until October 26, inclusive.

Following key findings were identified as the result of monitoring of main evening news releases on televisions during this monitoring period:

- Presidential candidates and their campaigns were actively covered in main evening news releases on all the channels. However, despite this, the candidates failed to appear among the top five subjects on any of the channels according to the time allocated to them.
- Although the election campaigns of presidential candidates were actively covered, the lack of analysis of their election programs was observed on all the channels. It is possible to say that almost nothing was added up to the information, which the voters got from the main evening news releases of the channels about the candidates’ programs from the beginning of the campaigning until the election day.
- Presidential candidates, also the President and the Prime Minister were covered with diverse frequency and volume. However, it is possible to say in general that the election environment was less polarized on the monitored channels, and that the equal conditions were provided to the subjects in most cases.

- Presidential candidates were mostly covered positively on all the channels, which can be explained by broadcasting the news about their campaigns and election activities.
- Growing number of analytical stories and increased in-depth coverage of particular topics were observed on all the channels during this monitoring period.

Many topical and important topics were covered regarding the significant events taking place in the country in the main news releases of the monitored TV channels from September 19 until October 26, inclusive. Of course, the especially significant event was the presidential elections scheduled for October 27, presidential candidates, their campaigns and activities. Besides, the main evening news releases referred to many other topical issues and themes in this period, such as: passing stricter laws for false bomb alerts, construction of Khudon hydro power plant and related events, situation at the Public Broadcaster, moving the border lines and situation at bordering villages, Sochi Olympics and the position of Georgia, trials of Vano Merabishvili and Bacho Akhalaia, Tomas Hammarberg's report, vintage 2013, President at the UN session, Prime Minister's meeting with experts and media representatives, Bidzina Ivanishvili's departure from politics and tentative candidate Prime Ministers, 20 years since the fall of Sokhumi, convention of the United National Movement, a juvenile deceased in Kutaisi prison, Irakli Garibashvili's report, etc.

Channel One of the Public Broadcaster

From September 19 until October 26, inclusive, we encountered broad, analytical and balanced stories in the main evening news releases on Channel One of the Public Broadcaster, where several different positions were shown. Majority of the stories provided exhaustive and objective information to the audience about the discussed issue. Some topics were being highlighted and broadly covered for several days in main news releases, such as the events developed in the village Dvani and Ditsi. This topic was very often covered and everything was discussed exhaustively, in details. It should also be pointed out that the election process was actively covered. The candidates were mostly discussed in the story "Elections 2013", which was prepared every day and provided an overview of programs and future plans of presidential candidates.

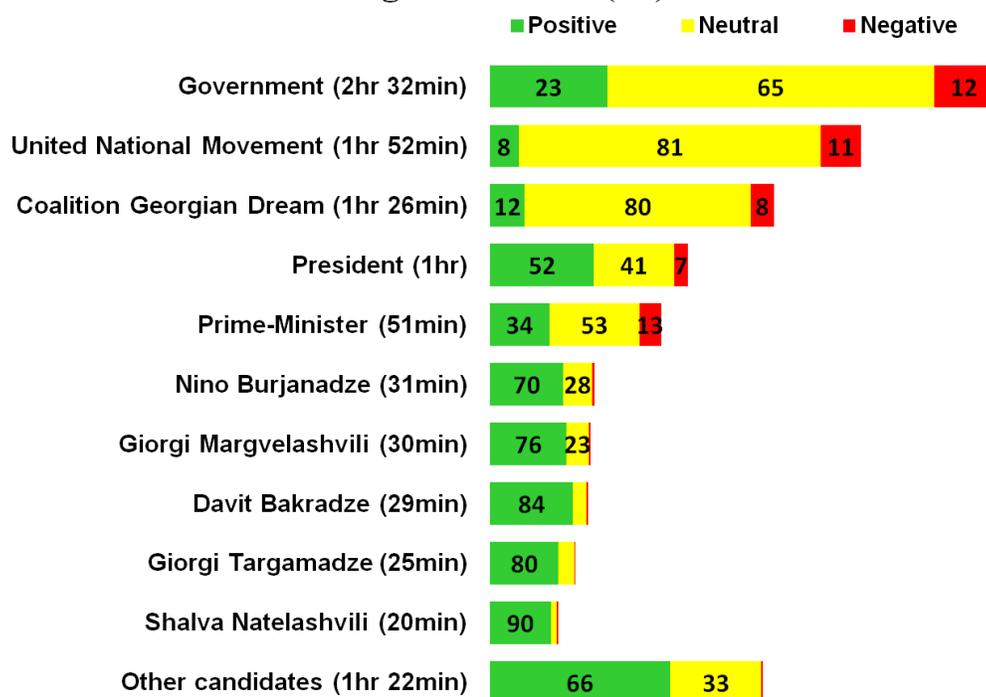
There is a noteworthy story broadcasted in October about the death of a juvenile prisoner, where the dead juvenile's injured body, wounds, faces and quite graphic

pictures of the mourning family were shown without any cover or warning. This made the story even graver although it did not contain any significant information.

As for the time allocated to the subjects, as it was the case during the previous monitoring periods, from September 19 until September 26, inclusive, the top-five subjects were again the government (21%), the United National Movement (15%), the Coalition Georgian Dream (12%), the President (8%), and the Prime Minister (7%). Among them the biggest share of positive tone was observed for the President (52%) and the Prime Minister (34%).

Although all of the presidential candidates failed to appear in the top five candidates according to the allocated time, almost equal portions of time were allocated to them. There was only one-minute difference between the portions of time allocated to Nino Burjanadze, Giorgi Margvelashvili and Davit Bakradze. As for the coverage tone for presidential candidates, excessively positive tone was used for all of them.

Time allocated to the subjects on GPB according to the tone (%)



It needs to be pointed out that the main news release of the Channel One of the Public Broadcaster did not broadcast the news about the arsenic spilled into the river Tskhenistskali, which supplies water to several cities.

Adjara TV

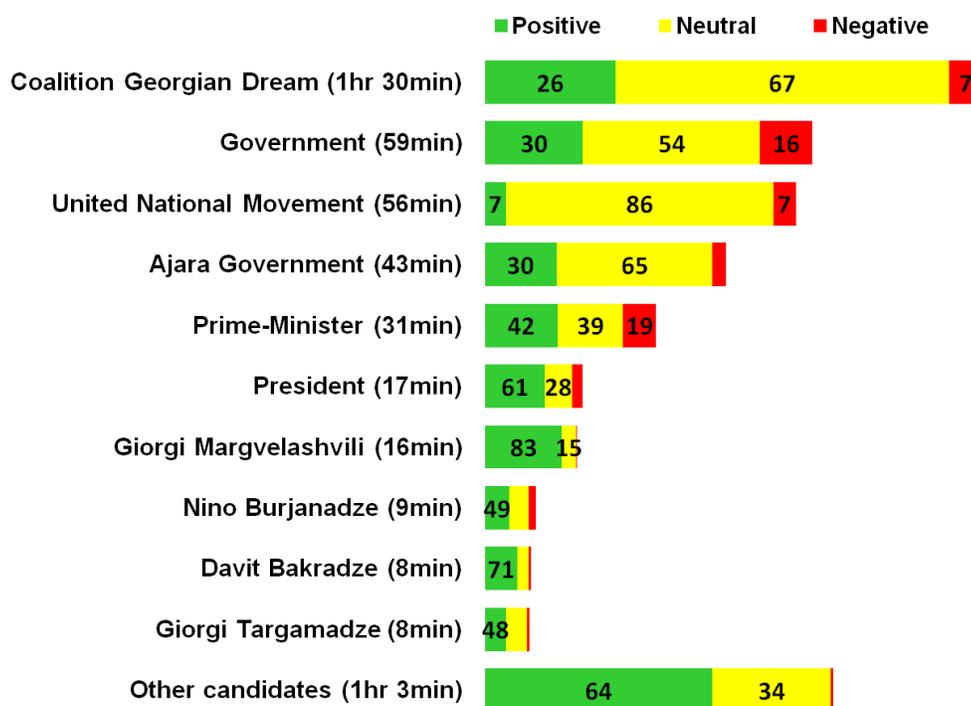
Coverage of central news increased even more on Adjara TV from September 19 until October 26. However, much time was again dedicated to the regional news in the main evening news releases. The stories broadcasted during this monitoring period were basically balanced and impartial.

There was a whole series of topics during this period, which were not covered by the Adjara TV, for example, termination of the construction of the military town, construction of Khudon hydro power plant, etc. However, social topics were actively covered as before. Besides, the significant seasonal problems of the region were also discussed. Whereas the emphasis was laid on tourism in summer, now the citrus harvest became the highlighted issue in the fall. It is noteworthy that more analytics was observed in social topics since October. A topic would be discussed from different angles and the information would also be provided exhaustively.

Although the coverage of presidential candidates increased as the Election Day came closer, in most cases their activities were aired only if the campaign took place in the region of Adjara. Such stories were well-balanced and mostly the interview with a voter was necessarily given in the story together with the comment of the candidate. Besides, a portrait of any presidential candidate was covered in every main news release within the frameworks of the election campaign, where the PR specialists and experts evaluated the ongoing electoral campaign of a particular candidate. This was reflected on the time allocated to the monitoring subjects. The most time was dedicated to Giorgi Margvelashvili among the presidential candidates, which totaled 4 percent (16) of the time allocated to all the subjects. Besides, it is noteworthy that 84 percent of his coverage was positive, which is the highest indicator among the candidates. Relatively less time was allocated to other presidential candidates.

As for the other monitoring subjects, according to the allocated time the top six subjects were the government, parties of the parliamentary majority and minority, the President, the Prime Minister and the Adjarian government. Among them the biggest share of negative tone was observed for the government and the Prime Minister.

Time allocated to the subjects on Ajara TV according to the tone (%)



Several cases of violation of ethical norms were observed during the period of September 19 – October 26. Among them we need to single out the story broadcasted on October 14, which was about a dead body of a 75-year old man washed up by the sea in Vartskhani settlement. There was a comment of the Emergency Situations Management Agency after showing this fact, and on its background the washed-up corpse with no cover was seen during the whole interview.

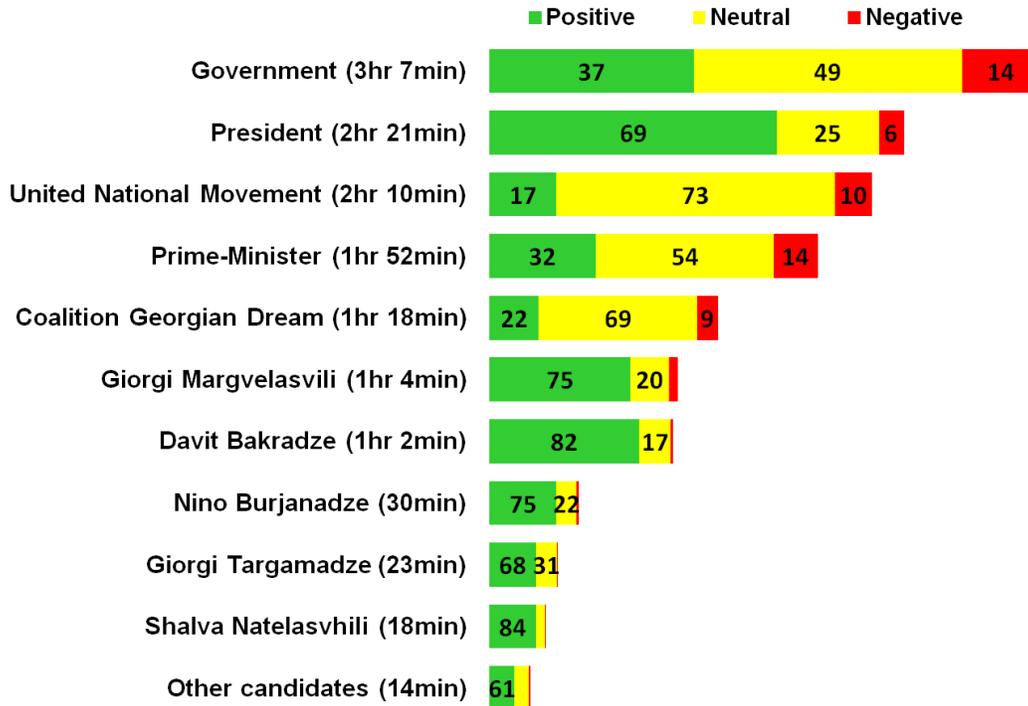
Rustavi 2

There were balanced and impartial reports observed in main evening news releases on Rustavi 2 during the reporting period. Despite some topics were acute and politicized, the journalist did not try to create a special context in some stories and provided the facts in a neutral way. Besides, broad and in-depth coverage was offered for the topics such as: construction of Khudon power plant and the Jihad Case.

However, even during this monitoring period a special attitude towards the President was eye-catching. His activities and speeches were covered quite broadly almost every day, and the stories mostly left positive impression about him. Besides, in the same stories the Prime Minister and the government were discussed in the negative context mostly due to the speech of the President. Besides, relatively less time was allocated to them in general. For example, there was a very broad coverage of the convention of the United National Movement on October 5 (the first news, 14 minutes), where a pretty big part of speeches of the President and Davit Bakradze were shown. After that there was the news about Giorgi Margvelashvili's campaign, which lasted for 3 minutes. There was a live broadcast with the president in the same program, which lasted for about 20 minutes. Just for the sake of comparison, we can also point out the news broadcasted on September 19 about the presentation of Giorgi Margvelashvili's presidential campaign, which took place at the Sports Palace. It was quite a big ceremony and Prime Minister, also government members made speeches. Rustavi 2 broadcasted this story as the fourth news and allocated 6 minutes to it. However, the story was quite positive.

According to the allocated time, like the previous monitoring periods, the top-five subjects were the government, the President, the United National Movement, the Coalition Georgian Dream and the Prime Minister. Among them the especially big share of positive tone was reported for the President – 69 percent. As for the presidential candidates, quite equal time was dedicated to Giorgi Margvelashvili and Davit Bakradze. However, Davit Bakradze has relatively more share of positive tone. It is also noteworthy that compared to other presidential candidates, Giorgi Margvelashvili has the lowest share of direct speech (55%). Nino Burjanadze, Giorgi Targamadze and Shalva Natelashvili were more actively covered out of other presidential candidates. News release on October 26 broadcasted the TV-addresses of these 5 main candidates.

Time allocated to the subjects on Rustavi 2 according to the tone (%)



There were some reports in main news releases on Rustavi 2 during this monitoring period, which were broadcasted without headlines. Moreover, in some cases the respondents did not have identification information.

Imedi

The stories broadcasted in the main news releases on Imedi during September 19 until October 26, inclusive, were mostly balanced and neutral. All the important issues were covered, which were the main stories during the day. There was no bias observed towards any particular political side. Positive or negative context in the news was mostly created by the fact itself, or the comments expressed in the story. During this period there were positive and negative stories about the government and the Prime Minister, also about the President. Compared to other monitoring periods, critical stories about the government increased since October; for example, stories about the problem related to the border of South Ossetia, also the arsenic spilled in the river Tskhenistskali. In a nutshell, political stories and topics were neutrally covered and opinions of the sides were balanced.

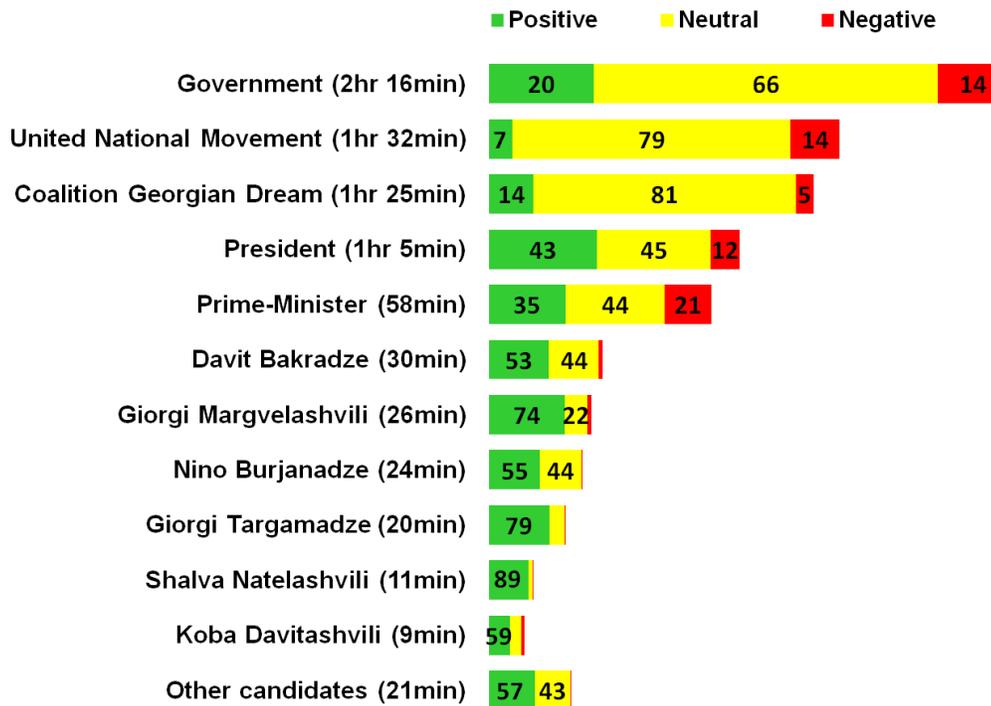
During this monitoring period several analytical and other stories were prepared on Imedi, which had different contents as compared to other channels, for example, the story broadcasted on September 23 about the messages and PR strategies of the election campaigns of presidential candidates. Campaign videos of the candidates were reviewed by the experts and specialists of PR technologies. There were no biased evaluations by the journalist. Likewise, a very good story was prepared on healthcare issues on October 23, where the visions and programs of various presidential candidates were provided in this respect.

As for the coverage of campaigns and activities of presidential candidates in general, this was limited to broadcasting little stories in the second part of the news releases, where just a fact would be delivered about a presidential candidate's meeting with voters. However, their address or speech was not broadcasted. In total, such stories lacked analytics and it is possible to say that they provided scarce information.

According to the allocated time, as it was the case among other monitored channels, again the government, the United National Movement, the coalition, the President and the Prime Minister were found among the top-five subjects in main news releases on Imedi. Among them the biggest share of positive coverage was observed for the President (43%), and the biggest share of negative tone – for the Prime Minister (21%).

As for the presidential candidates, relatively more time, with similar indicators, was allocated to Davit Bakradze, Giorgi Margvelashvili, Nino Burjanadze and Giorgi Targamadze, though less time was allocated to Shalva Natelashvili and Koba Davitashvili. In total, 21 minutes were allocated to other presidential candidates during the monitoring period.

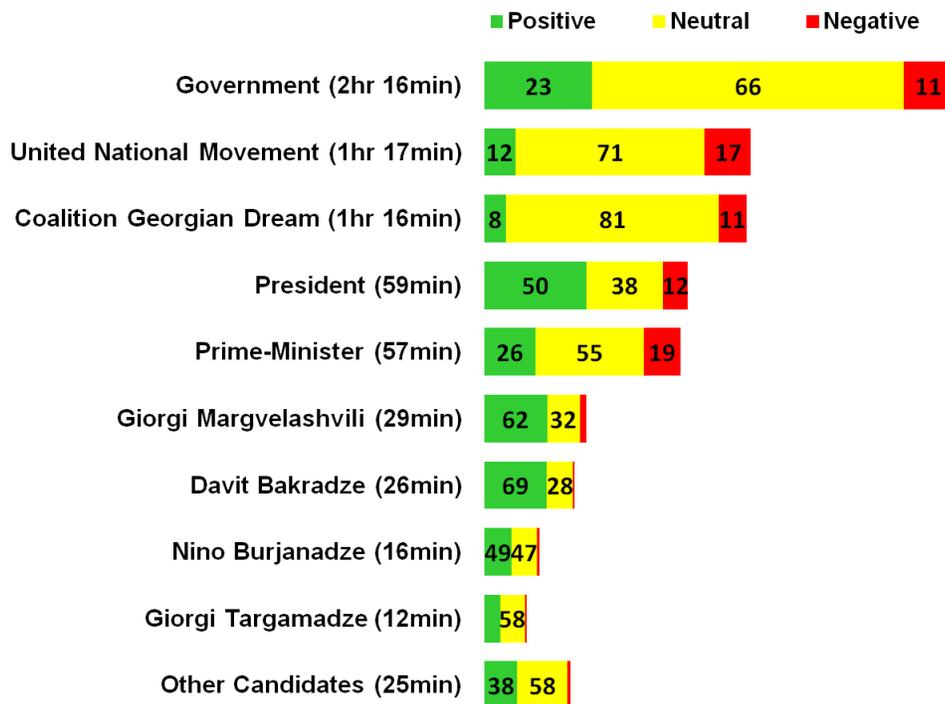
Time allocated to the subjects on Imedi according to the tone (%)



Maestro

During this monitoring period Maestro reduced the timing of the main evening news releases even more. There were announcements of stories at the end of the program, which would be broadcasted on Maestro 24. During September 19 until October 26, inclusive, there was no bias observed for the favor of any political force while covering the news. There was criticism and also the positive coverage of the government and the Prime Minister, the United National Movement and the Coalition Georgian Dream. The President was presented positively during the half of the time allocated to him. This is mostly related to Saakashvili's speech at the United Nations. Criticism of the Prime Minister was a consequence of his meeting with media representatives.

Time allocated to the subjects on Maestro according to the tone (%)



On approaching the elections, the focus increased on presidential candidates. The stories about their campaigns were broadcasted in the beginning of the program. However, intensity of covering the presidential campaign did not change significantly. According to the allocated time and coverage tone, there was not any particular attitude towards the main candidates. In general, the candidates were covered quite positively from the end of September through October, and even before. The story of October 26 showed summary statements of all the main presidential candidates.

The reports, which were broadcasted in main evening news releases, mostly provided full coverage of main topics and showed different opinions. However, there were some reports where the lack of sources was observed and no different opinion was provided. Maestro had two exclusive news at the end of October: interview with a former inmate in the program on October 23, who said that his torturers were released from prison. Besides, an interview with a convict was broadcasted on October 24, who states that a juvenile was raped at Ksani Prison. Despite the confidentiality of respondents was observed in the stories, and investigative and state structures were represented (or it was mentioned that they could not be contacted), having these interviews broadcasted

as the first news just a few days before the elections looked like remembering the prison scandal of 2012, and subsequent negative attitude towards the authorities in connection to this fact.

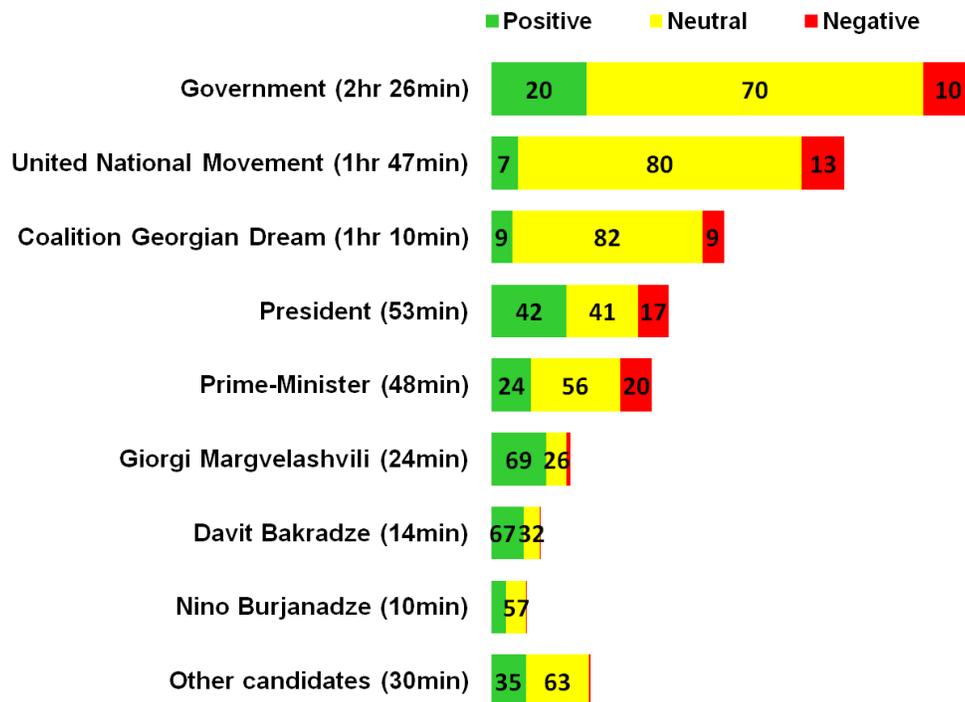
Kavkasia

During September 19 until October 26, inclusive, main evening news releases on Kavkasia provided mostly a neutral coverage of the news. There were various sides in the news reports and no bias was observed to any of the sides. All the main news of the day was included in the main evening news programs almost every day. However, often there were short and dry reports, and lack of analytics and information was often observed. Despite this, some issues, such as the Sochi Olympics and the position of the Georgian side about his issue were covered every day, quite broadly and exhaustively.

Kavkasia covered main activities of presidential candidates, but allocated the most attention to the campaigns of Margvelashvili and Bakradze. Presentation of Giorgi Margvelashvili's presidential program at the Sports Palace on September 19, also the convention of the United National Movement on October 5, were broadly covered. Election activities of Nino Burjanadze, Giorgi Targamadze and Zurab Kharatishvili were also more actively covered during recent period.

As for the time allocated to the subjects, as it was the case on other channels and during other monitoring periods, none of the presidential candidates failed to appear among the top-five subjects on Kavkasia during September 19 until October 26. The top five subjects again were the government, the Coalition Georgian Dream, the United National Movement, the President and the Prime Minister. As it was mentioned above, the most time was allocated to Margvelashvili and Bakradze among presidential candidates.

Time allocated to the subjects on Kavkasia according to the tone (%)



As for the coverage tone, the biggest share of negative coverage was observed for the Prime Minister (20%) and the President (17%) among the main subject. However, it should be pointed out that the President's positive share is almost twice as much as the Prime Minister's positive share. As for presidential candidates, Margvelashvili and Bakradze have similar rate of positive coverage. Nino Burjanadze had relatively less share of positive tone.

Technical problems were again quite often encountered on Kavkasia. There were cases when the anchor announced some news, but then another report would be aired, or the respondent's comment in the story was absolutely inadequate and taken out of context.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the period September 19 through October 26, inclusive, it is possible to say that despite active coverage of presidential candidates and their campaigns, none of the candidates was found among the top-five ones on any of the

channels according to the allocated time. Their activities were covered different ways on a daily basis, in different parts of the programs. Some channels made stories about their 'portraits', and analyzed their PR and advertisements. However, they laid emphasis on or prepared stories for analyzing their programs very seldom.

During this monitoring period, the TV channels covered mostly all the important events in their main news releases. However, sometimes some news or topics were omitted in the news releases on some channels. Presidential candidates, also the President and the Prime Minister were covered with different frequency and for various amount of time, but in general it is possible to say that the election environment was more or less equitable and less polarized on the monitored channels. According to the allocated time, the top five subjects were again the government, the President, the Prime Minister, the Coalition Georgian Dream and the United National Movement on all the channels, but with different sequences.